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ALASKA REGION

Overseas Tour
Renewal Agreement
Travel Information

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NOTICE

This booklet responds to several of the more frequently asked questions concerning Overseas Tour Renewal Agreement Travel (OTRAT). IT is NOT intended to be all inclusive nor is it intended to replace the Federal Travel Regulations (FSH 6509.33) or supplements thereto.

CAUTION, some items may have changed since the booklet was published. You are encouraged to discuss this booklet and any questions concerning OTRAT with employees in the travel section of your unit before you make reservations or request travel.



1. What is Overseas Tour Renewal Agreement Travel (OTRAT)?

OTRAT is a benefit applicable to certain employees assigned to posts of duty outside the conterminous United States (lower 48 states, CONUS). Eligible employees may become entitled to transportation and en route per diem (computed at the the CONUS Rate) from their official station to their previous actual residence or alternate location and return to their current official station. The employee's immediate family may also become eligible for round trip transportation based on the employee's entitlement. The immediate family does not qualify for per diem.

2. Who is eligible for OTRAT?

OTRAT benefits have historically been granted to eligible employees hired from outside Alaska for permanent positions within Alaska. OTRAT is contingent upon completion of a 2-year tour of duty in Alaska and entering into a new written 2-year agreement. You should be informed of your eligibility at the time you transfer to Alaska. If you are still in doubt, contact your B&F section at the Forest level. If you are a Regional Office employee, contact the F&AS Travel Section.

3. How do I begin getting an authorization for OTRAT?

Form R10-6500-7, Employment Renewal Agreement and Request for Travel Authorization, must be completed, signed by you, and approved by your supervisor. This form should then be forwarded to either your B&F unit or, to F&AS if you are a Regional Office employee. Your reimbursement is limited to discount fares/super savers such as 14-day advance purchase fare tickets. These tickets require purchase within 24 hours of the reservation being made. Please submit requests at least 30 days in advance to allow adequate time to process an AD-202 Travel Authorization and make your reservation prior to travel. You need to make your reservations and get your tickets early as there are limited seats for this fare. You will need to pay any difference over what the government pays as an add/collect with the travel management center.

4. How will I know when I am authorized to travel?

You will be authorized to travel upon the receipt of an AD-202, Travel Authorization. Authority to approve Travel Authorizations for OTRAT is delegated to the Forest Supervisor, Fiscal Officer, or the Director of Fiscal and Accounting Services, R-10. A Travel Authorization **MUST** be issued prior to the time of travel. Your copy of the Travel Authorization will indicate what travel is approved by the Forest Service. You are encouraged to review the Travel Authorization to make sure the travel dates and location is correct. If they are not correct, you should contact the office preparing the AD-202 to inform them of any difference *prior* to your travel. You are encouraged to make reservations well in advance of travel. This can be especially critical when planning travel during holiday periods as seats are limited for special fares. The Forest Service will not pay for more than the 14-day advance purchase fare.



5. How do I obtain airline tickets and reservations for my trip?

Employees should make reservations through their designated Travel Management Center or through the use of their individual Government sponsored American Express card. Employees should check with their local unit to see if local policy allows them the use of the Government sponsored American Express card for the purchase of OTRAT tickets. Employee needs to obtain copy of actual itinerary and a copy of any needed constructive itineraries for reconstruction purposes. These are provided by the travel management center but not normally by an airline.

6. May I procure tickets through other travel agencies when they offer a special rate, especially if there is a substantial savings?

No, use of travel agencies (except Federal Travel Management Centers) is *prohibited* by the Federal Travel Regulations. Depending on your location the current agencies Federal Travel Management Centers are American Express Travel Center and AirSea Travel.



7. May I use cash to procure tickets?

All common carrier transportation in excess of \$100 must be procured using either a Government Transportation Request or a Government sponsored American Express charge card.

8. Do I need to prepare a travel voucher upon return even if I choose not to claim per diem?

Yes, a travel voucher must be submitted in order to substantiate your eligibility date for your next OTRAT. Also, all tickets issued on a GTR must be properly accounted for on a travel voucher to relieve the traveler of the liability associated with the tickets. The travel voucher should be completed and submitted in a timely manner. A new Travel Authorization will not be issued for a subsequent OTRAT until a travel voucher is completed for all travelers taking the last OTRAT. The traveler is expected to submit both an actual itinerary and a reconstructed itinerary, if applicable, to document all airline travel.



9. What other expenses (besides common carrier transportation for all family members and en route per diem for the employee) will be reimbursed?

You may be reimbursed a ordinary taxi fare *or* mileage and parking (NTE the cost of a taxi) between your residence and the airport and on the return from airport to residence for all family members traveling together. You may also be reimbursed for a taxi or a rental car if that means of practical transportation is the only mode of travel to your actual residence or alternate location. You may be reimbursed for actual travel to and from, but not while you are at your destination. Other types of expenses may be reimbursable on a constructed cost basis. Check with your B&F unit or F&AS (for RO employees) to be sure.

If a rental vehicle is used to travel to an OTRAT point, only the charge to and from OTRAT destination will be reimbursed. Any charge to return the vehicle at the destination is NOT reimbursable.

10. How have regulation changes affected eligibility for OTRAT?

1. Eligible employees stationed in Alaska on or before September 8, 1982, have continuing eligibility (grandfather-rights) for OTRAT. In other words, employees eligible for OTRAT continue to be eligible with the completion of each 2-year tour of duty and after signing a new agreement to remain in Alaska for another 2 year tour of duty.

2. Employees assigned, appointed, or transferred to Alaska after September 8, 1982, may be eligible in limited circumstances. Individual agencies set their own criteria for eligibility. Currently, Forest Service employees *MAY* qualify if:

- a. the original transfer to Alaska is to a remote location (as designed for OTRAT purposes only), Petersburg, Craig, Thorne Bay, Hoonah, Cordova, Yakutat and Wrangell, at any grade or
- b. the original transfer to Alaska is at a GS-9 grade or lower, or
- c. the Regional Forester recommends that OTRAT is necessary for recruiting and retention purposes and the Washington Office Director of Personnel and Civil Rights approves.



11. How many times may I earn eligibility for OTRAT?

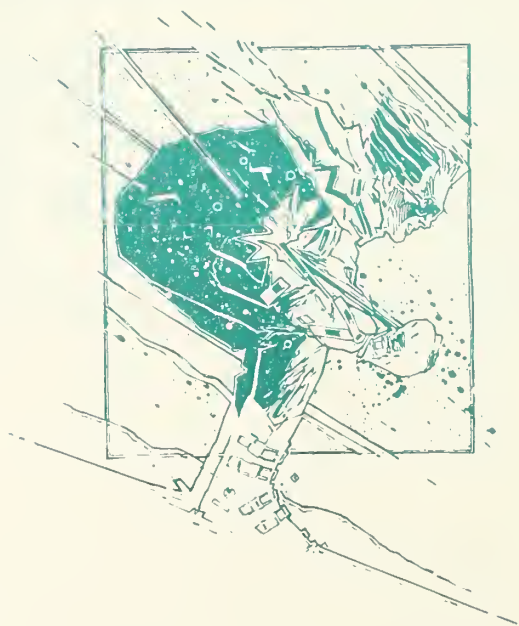
Employees stationed in Alaska on or before September 8, 1982, may request OTRAT after completion of each 2-year tour of duty and after signing a new 2-year agreement. There is no maximum number of trips that may be taken provided eligibility is earned for each trip. Employees transferred to Alaska after September 8, 1982, may be authorized up to two round trips beginning within 5 years from the date they reported for duty in Alaska. When determining the eligibility date for departure on OTRAT the same rules apply to all employees regardless of the date of transfer. Employees with limited eligibility must be careful when scheduling their first trip. After you take your first trip you must again serve 2 years before you can take the second trip. In other words, if you delay your first trip until after the end of your third year you lose your eligibility for a second trip, because you cannot serve a full 2-year tour all within the 5-year period. See Comptroller General Decision, B-234993 dated October 5, 1989.

12. May I postpone or advance my eligibility date or do I need to take my trip exactly 2 years from the time I begin my tour of duty?

The standard 2-year tour may be adjusted for up to 6 months either prior to or after your eligibility date and you will maintain your established eligibility date. You must request a Travel Authorization, form AD-202, before you travel. If your travel is delayed beyond the 6-month window, a new eligibility date will be established based on the date you actually leave on OTRAT. Example: An employee who is eligible June 1, 1991, could start their travel up to 6 months prior to and 6 months after this date. If they left January 15, 1992, this would become their new eligibility date since it is more than 6 months after June 1, 1991. This is true even if the delay is for official reasons. Supervisors need to take this into consideration when denying leave.

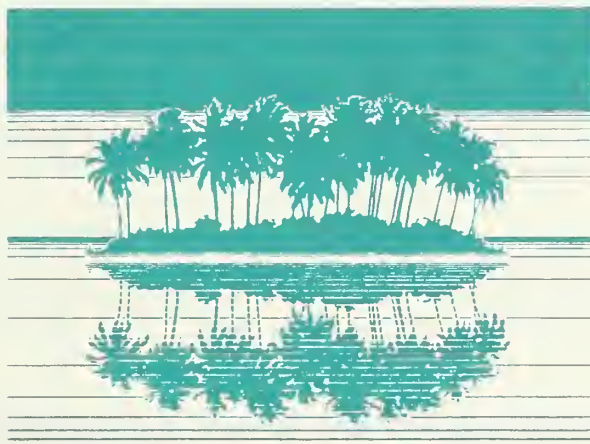
13. May I travel to an alternate location rather than my previous actual residence?

Yes, however, reimbursement will be limited to the lower of the total cost for direct travel to your planned destination or the total cost of direct travel to your previous actual residence. This location must be established on the approved AD-202, Travel Authorization.



14. Am I allowed any stopovers en route to my destination?

The Employee Renewal Agreement, form R10-6500-7, specifies travel *directly* to the previous actual residence, or alternate location. Consequently, travel to the authorized destination must be direct. It is important to note that the total reimbursable travel cost will be limited to the lower of direct travel from the official station to the previous actual residence and direct return *or* direct travel from the official station to the alternate location and return. *If* travel is not direct, or a stopover is made while en route to the authorized destination, the reimbursement will be limited treating the en route stopover as the authorized alternate destination. Stopovers are allowed for normal plane schedules. An example: If you arrive in Seattle at 8:00 p.m. with no plane connection until the next day at 7:00 a.m. This is allowable and is still considered direct travel. An example of non-direct travel: You arrive in Seattle 10:00 a.m. and have another plane leaving at 1:00 p.m., but you elect to leave the following day in the afternoon. Your OTRAT would end in Seattle even though you had continued to travel on to Hawaii.



15. Does my immediate family have to travel at the same time and to the same location that I travel?

No, however, there are some limitations. Separate travel is allowable only after the issuance of a Travel Authorization and after the date the employee becomes eligible for OTRAT. If the dependent(s) depart the official duty station prior to the employee's eligibility date but return after the eligibility date, reimbursement for the dependents' transportation will be limited to the *return travel to the official station only*. If dependents depart the official station prior to the employee, but after the employee's eligibility date, the transportation cost of the dependents' travel **MUST** be paid by the employee and claimed on a travel voucher after the employee and family member(s) return from OTRAT, as the benefits are based on the employee exercising his/her entitlement to travel. The maximum reimbursement will be limited to the constructed costs as if all family members traveled with the employee.

The employee should use their Government American Express Card for the purchase of tickets when members of the family leave early. (see item 7) Please check with your local Budget & Finance staff if you intend to purchase tickets with your card.

16. How long are my dependent children eligible for OTRAT?

An employee's dependent child loses eligibility upon (1) marriage or (2) his/her 21st birthday or (3) when he/she is no longer a member of the employee's household (no longer lives in same facilities as employee, excluding college students).

However, an employee's dependent child who turns 21 before the employee is eligible for his/her next OTRAT may have return entitlements.

See FTR 6509.33 Chapter 302-1.12(g).

If eligible, the 21-year old dependent must leave on his/her one-way trip before the end of the employee's current agreed tour of duty in order for the employee to be eligible for reimbursement of the dependent's travel. Dependent is limited to the lower of, the one-way cost to return to the original residence or to an alternate location.

The employee must initially pay for the dependent's ticket and then claim reimbursement on his/her OTRAT travel voucher. See item 7 above for way to purchase ticket. Tickets costing over \$100 may not be purchased with cash or personal credit card.

17. May I take my OTRAT travel within the state of Alaska?

Yes, your alternate location may be another point within Alaska.

18. If I do not take advantage of my OTRAT benefit, are my dependent(s) eligible?

Unfortunately, the dependent(s) eligibility is based on the employee's use of his/her entitlement, therefore no reimbursement could be made for the dependent(s) travel.





19. May I go to a foreign country during my OTRAT?

Travel to a foreign country during OTRAT will not be approved except where it is the employee's place of residence at the time of transferring to Alaska. Otherwise, travel is limited to the United States, its territories or possessions, and Puerto Rico. Necessary travel by privately owned vehicle through Canada, by the most direct normally traveled route, between Alaska and the CONUS will be allowed. Use of marine transportation other than the Alaska Marine Highway and use of Canadian railroads, ferries, or buses will not be authorized or reimbursed. This prohibition also includes foreign travel in conjunction with OTRAT. Explanation, you intend to travel to Miami for OTRAT. You then plan a side trip to Chile S.A. which you will pay for yourself. The foreign travel to Chile is not proper when taken in conjunction with the trip to Miami for OTRAT.

20. When computing constructive travel expenses to an employee's previous actual residence or when determining maximum entitlement for travel to an alternate location, will lowest "Y" Class coach fare be used for the constructive airfare?

The Comptroller General of the United States has ruled that special air fares such as Super Saver, Government Contract "City Pair", and other discount fares should be used for constructive purposes *based on the scheduled dates of departure and return* provided the agency can determine before travel begins that the discount fare would be practical and economical. The Forest Service has determined that, for purposes of OTRAT, use of special fares is practical and economical. This is why we emphasize advance planning when requesting your AD-202 and making reservations.





21. What mode of travel should I use when traveling on OTRAT?

The mode of travel authorized is common air carrier. If you choose to travel by another method such as auto, your reimbursement will be limited on a constructed basis to common air carrier. Regardless of the mode, travel to an alternate location or previous actual residence must be accomplished by the *most direct* routing. This may involve the use of the Alaska Highway System for certain locations. Your POV may not be shipped or sent unaccompanied on the Alaska Marine Highway.

22. Can I take OTRAT in conjunction with temporary duty?

Yes, however, your trip will need to be reconstructed. OTRAT is normally from your duty station to another location. We do understand the desire to save the government money and taking the two trips in conjunction would save your TDY expenses. Your allowed OTRAT expenses cannot exceed the cost from your official station to OTRAT destination and return. This *does not* mean you can add OTRAT allowance and TDY together. The controlling limit for OTRAT reimbursement shall be the reconstructed cost as if TDY travel had not been involved. The easiest way to reconstruct is if the TDY travel is a round trip side trip from the residence/alternate location or an intermediate stopover.



23. Do I get a per diem allowance?

Yes, only the employee issued the Travel Authorization is entitled to a per diem allowance, not family members. CONUS rate for per diem is allowable for enroute travel only (within CONUS) and is limited on a constructed basis when travel is to an alternate location.

24. Is the reimbursement ceiling for travel to an alternate location applied on a family basis?

No, the reimbursement for transportation for a family member cannot exceed the reimbursement for the employee. Further, the reimbursement is calculated based on the lower of 1) the actual travel, 2) constructed travel to the employee's previous actual residence for all family members traveling at the same time, 3) constructed travel to the employee's alternate location for all family members traveling at the same time (even if some family members actually traveled at different times and to a different destination), or 4) constructed (most direct) travel to an employee's previous actual residence (regardless of whether the employee goes to the actual residence or an alternate location) plus direct travel by other family members to a different destination and direct return.

25. What do I owe the Government if I do not complete the new 2-year Agreement I signed when requesting OTRAT.

Liability for OTRAT is complicated and must be resolved on a case by case basis. An employee who fails to complete the 2-year tour of duty specified in the new agreement may be held liable for all expenses associated with their OTRAT. At the time the agreement is signed it must be the intent of the employee to remain at the same, or another post of duty outside CONUS. Liability may be waived when it is clearly in the interest of the Government to do so. See FTR 302-1.5. If the employee is transferred with a promotion to a Forest Service position within CONUS, liability will be waived. If a transfer is to a position in CONUS and involves a lateral reassignment or a reduction the Director of Fiscal and Accounting Services will determine if waiving the liability is acceptable to the Government (FTR 6509.33-93-1 302-1.13 (d) 6/93.

HAVE A GOOD AND SAFE TRIP

